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DEPT FOR EUR/NCE AARON JENSEN

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SUBJECT: FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE CHIEF RESIGNS

Classified By: Polcouns Theodore Tanoue for 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) The head of the Foreign Intelligence Service (SIE), Claudiu Saftoiu, resigned March 19, following his controversial testimony last week before the special parliamentary committee to investigate the president for abuse of constitutional authority. PC President Dan Voiculescu, who chairs the special investigating committee, wrote to the speakers of the two Chambers of the Parliament on March 15 suggesting that there may have been a serious infringement of law and a violation of civil rights by the SIE. According to transcripts of his testimony published on March 19, Saftoiu reportedly acknowledged that the SIE--with the authorization of prosecutors--illegally monitored and taped private domestic conversations. (Note: Under Romanian law, only the Domestic Intelligence Service (SRI) can monitor private conversations, after obtaining a bench warrant from a competent judge and based on probable cause.) According to a published transcript of discussions between Saftoiu and the members of the special investigating committee, Saftoiu also did not exclude the possibility that other national security institutions may have illegally monitored private conversations.

12. (SBU) Voiculescu admitted that this issue exceeded the scope of his special parliamentary committee to investigate the evidence to suspend the president, and that his committee was only notifying Parliament their concerns in the hope that Parliament would take the necessary steps to address these possible violations of the law. Subsequently, following Saftoiu's resignation, Parliament announced on March 19 the formation of a new joint special investigating committee to look into issues raised by Saftoiu's testimony and the allegations of abuse and illegal actions by Romanian intelligence and national security services. Part of this new joint committee's mandate will be to investigate which institutions have the technical means to monitor communications and how these capabilities are used.

13. (SBU) Following his testimony last week, Saftoiu attempted to explain in a press interview that he was misquoted and that his statements were simply abbreviated remarks about the complex procedure necessary for obtaining authorization to monitor private conversations; he said that his mistake lay in not going into details during the hearings. He acknowledged that the taping authorization is given by a judge and is conducted by the SRI which only reports its findings to SIE.

14. (C) Comment: A senior PSD contact had told us last week that while Voiculescu's investigation of the charges against the President for abuse of office had run its course (and would duly submit a report to Parliament on March 21), the PSD was now pushing for the creation of a separate new committee to investigate charges that the SIE had abused its authorities in monitoring private conversations. This is

consonant with the opposition strategy of weakening President Basescu since it would put one of his few explicit constitutionally-mandated authorities under new scrutiny. Saftoiu's resignation appears to be the first casualty of this effort to open up a new front against the President. Saftoiu's wife, Adriana, is one of the President's closest advisors so the political embarrassment will inevitably splatter on Basescu. The fledgling spymaster reportedly did not distinguish himself in his new role as SIE director, and his name also cropped up in January press accounts that accused Saftoiu of having used his influence to improve a road leading to his new country home. Under these circumstances, the normally combative Basescu may decide not to rise to this particular new challenge by the opposition. End Comment.
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